

English 5: Advanced Composition & Critical Thinking
Virtue & Character
Spring 2020

Instructor: Jacob Aharonian
Class: TTH 10:30-12:00
Section: #4300
Class Room: Emeritus 1610

Instructor Contact Information
Office: Emeritus 1663
Phone: 707.494.9418
Email: jaharonian@santarosa.edu

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:30am
Or by appointment

**** This syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester.**

Course Description

English 5 is a critical reasoning and advanced composition course designed to develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills beyond the level achieved in English 1A. The course will focus on development of logical reasoning and analytical and argumentative writing skills.

In addition, this specific section of English 5 will focus on the topics of Virtue and Character, and all the reading and writing for the class will address these topics in some way. Why a topical class? As a teacher of writing, I strongly believe that the “goodness” in good writing can only be isolated and defined by referencing a broader community or conversation—to wit, there’s no such thing as “good writing” apart from a defining social and rhetorical context. Hopefully, a semester devoted to discussing such immediate and pressing topics will be fascinating and significant both in your academic and personal development. The relevance of the topics as addressed by both members of the academy and those on the periphery illustrate the transgressive nature of the topics themselves, and will find points of application and engagement with all of us.

Required Texts

- Brooks, David *The Second Mountain* (Reserve Call No. *HM 1111.B76 2019*)
- Enger, Leif *Peace Like a River* (Reserve Call No. *PS 3555 .N4223 P42 2001*)
- Ronson, Jon *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* (Reserve Call No. *HM 661 .R66 2015*)
- Tolstoy, Leo *The Kreutzer Sonata & Other Short Stories*
- *Assorted Essays/Articles (to be handed out)*

Other Course Materials

- Composition Notebook (or similar) for Reading Comprehension Journals
- A writing manual with current MLA standards (e.g. Rules for Writers)
- A good college-level dictionary and thesaurus

Student Learning Outcomes

Over the course of the semester, you will:

- Identify and analyze the structure of arguments in the reading assignments.
- Evaluate the validity and soundness of arguments in the readings and in your own compositions.
- Identify common formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.
- Apply principles of inductive and deductive reasoning to your arguments.
- Distinguish between factual and opinion statements.
- Distinguish between, and use, denotative and connotative aspects of language for appropriate rhetorical ends.
- Draw inferences from a variety of sources (print, media, Internet and electronic databases).

- Identify propaganda and other manipulations of rhetoric--charged language and slanted facts in the readings and in your own compositions.
- Write a number of essays totaling 6,500-8,000 words, divided between short essays of 1,000-2,000 words and more comprehensive essays of up to 3,000-3,500 words.
- Employ writing strategies including analysis, synthesis, and summary.
- Employ writing strategies including causal analysis, advocacy of ideas, persuasion, evaluation, refutation, interpretation, and definition.
- Demonstrate continued development in writing correct, sophisticated college-level prose.
- Examine classical divisions of rhetorical appeal including ethos, logos, and pathos.
- Employ effective writing techniques including organization for logic and coherence; revision for focus, clarity, precision, and diction; use of correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Compile and evaluate library research for application in research papers.

Grading and Evaluation

Your grade in this class will be based on your accumulated points for the assignments listed below based on the grading scale of 90-100%=A; 80-89%=B; 70-79%=C; 60-69%=D:

Reading Comprehension Journals (every reading for 5pts).....	140 POINTS
Critical Responses (2 @ 50pts each).....	100 POINTS
Class Participation.....	60 POINTS
Cultural Analysis Essay.....	50 POINTS
Midterm.....	100 POINTS
Essay 1.....	100 POINTS
Essay 2.....	100 POINTS
Essay 3.....	100 POINTS
Research Project.....	250 POINTS
• Prospectus (30 points)	
• Annotated Bibliography (100 points)	
• Final Essay (120 points)	

1000 TOTAL POINTS

If you are uncertain about your class standing at any point in the course, please arrange an appointment or see me during office hours.

Please note that turning in all the assignments, participating faithfully in the community of the class, and attending regularly win you the right to have your work evaluated. You must complete all the course assignments and participate heartily in the class in order to be considered for a passing grade.

All readings, assignments, and homework should be completed by the day on which they are listed on the Assignment Schedule.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit given in this class. That doesn't mean, however, that there is no chance of changing your grade for the better. If you are dissatisfied with the graded assessment of your writing, I will gladly re-read and re-grade that assignment *one time only*. This applies *only* to full-length essays (not in-class writings or response pieces). If you take part in this offer, it will require two things from you: 1) a substantial revision of the paper. I don't want to simply re-read the same paper with a new comma or different title; the paper must show real, concerted effort at revision. 2) In light of this, you *must* come meet with me *in person* to discuss the essay and the changes made to it. Often (but not always) this process has the benefit of potentially raising the grade for the paper half a letter grade.

Policies and Expectations

Student Responsibilities

As a member of the academy, certain expectations will be placed upon you for the duration of your time in this course. Since this is a three-unit class, I expect that students spend *at least* six hours *per week* of study on their own. The reading and writing load for this class will be fairly difficult to navigate; any failure to spend a significant amount of time preparing for class will diminish your chances of doing well at the end. This includes setting aside time for accomplishing both the required reading and subsequent writing.

It is also your responsibility to come to class prepared to speak to the readings. This level of English demands an on-going competence in critical thinking and discussion skills; these goals cannot be attained without concerted participation from you. I have already read these novels and essays—I am interested in what *you* have to say about them.

It is your responsibility to turn off all electronic devices while in class (e.g. smartphones, etc.), unless they allow you to heartily contribute to the class discussion (i.e. Kindles or other e-readers). English is not a discipline that requires technology; as such, those devices are not necessary to the learning of this class.

It is your responsibility to arrive on time and stay for the duration of class (see Attendance Policy below).

Attendance

Missing even a single day and being late can result in missing information, insights, exercises and announcements that are crucial for your success in this course. Of course emergencies arise, so bear in mind the following:

- I will drop any student who misses the first two class meetings.
- If you miss **two consecutive classes** at any time during the semester, leave me a message to let me know whether you intend to stay in the class.
- If you wish, exchange phone numbers/e-mail addresses with two or three classmates. If you miss class, call or email a classmate immediately to find out what you missed. **DO NOT CONTACT ME FOR THIS INFORMATION.**
- A total of 3 (three) *unexcused* absences during the semester will result in the lowering of your standing **one full letter grade**. More than that and you will be dropped from the class.
- Consistent tardiness (i.e. more than 3 in a row) will count as one unexcused absence.
- Likewise, leaving class early without first consulting me will result in an unexcused absence.

Late Papers

Papers that are submitted after the deadline **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. If you know you will miss a class on a day an assignment is due, you must make arrangements to have a classmate turn in your assignment for you in class on the due date. All assignments are due *at the beginning of class*. I will not accept assignments via email, slipped under my office door during class, or if you come to class late and they have already been collected.

Rare circumstances may occur for which I may consider accepting an essay late; it is impossible to predict all the various conditions that would qualify for turning in a late paper (one example *may* be hospitalization), so it is at my discretion to decide what exigencies are appropriate for extending a deadline for an essay. You should operate under the assumption that if your paper is late, it will not be accepted.

NOTE WELL: Make-up work will not be accepted for in-class writing assignments and quizzes.

Paper Format and Style

All papers must observe correct MLA format and bibliographic style. You should know what this looks like by now. If not, you can visit the Writing Center on campus (Emeritus 1629), or purchase a writing manual with examples of MLA citation.

Grading

Each paper will be evaluated using specific criteria geared to reflect the learning outcomes desired. I'll endeavour to communicate these outcomes as clearly as I can when assigning papers. But here's what grades generally mean:

- **A papers** demonstrate extraordinary creativity and brilliance. They are very well written, showing strong, vigorous (and correct) voice and style. They make fascinating contributions to the disciplinary conversation on the topic at hand.
- **B papers** demonstrate all the strengths of A papers, but at a less successful level of execution. Their imagination and creativity may be less even, and their style may be less strong or vivid. They may demonstrate minor lapses in correctness.
- **C papers** represent adequate answers to the writing prompt. These papers accomplish what the assignment asked for, and they do so with reasonable creativity and adequately correct and graceful prose.
- **D and F** papers will receive this stamp:



As a rule, I am normally fairly quick about returning graded papers. Please know that I take the job of grading your work extremely seriously, and I take as much care in executing that job as I can. But do know this: I take it as my main responsibility to tell you (with as much care and grace as possible) when your work is strong and when it is weak. I *greatly* encourage you to come and discuss your writing with me.

Plagiarism & Cheating

Submitting work that is not your own is *absolutely* unacceptable, and will be punished to the highest degree. *AT A MINIMUM* it will mean failure of the assignment and expulsion from the class for two (2) class sessions. The case will also be handed over to Student Services with the recommendation of dismissal from SRJC. I take plagiarism very, very seriously. DO NOT DO IT. A full copy of SRJC's policy toward cheating and plagiarism can be found here: <https://student-conduct.santarosa.edu/>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need disability-related accommodations for this class (e.g. note-taker, test-taking services, special furniture, etc.), please provide me with the Authorization for Academic Accommodations (AAA letter) from the Disability Resources Department (DRD) as soon as possible. You may also speak with me privately during office hours about your accommodations. If you have not received authorization from DRD, it is recommended that you contact them directly. DRD is located in Bertolini Hall on the 3rd floor.

Final Note

I reserve the right periodically to alter the syllabus and/or policies (tho' always in favor of the student!). For this reason, it's important for you to keep up on class business.

Overview of Graded Assignments

Critical Responses

The critical response assignment is an exercise designed to get you to engage in a substantive and specific way with the reading in the course. Strong papers will employ powerful and ethical rhetorical means to argue specifically to or with a point or points raised by a reading or readings. "Arguing with" does not mean only "disagreeing." You certainly can simply disagree with a reading—but you can also agree, challenge, inquire, problematize, or extend a point. Here are some specific examples of how these might look:

- Pick an issue discussed in the reading(s) and talk about it in relation to incidents in your own life, aspects of your writing, etc.
- Challenge a writer on a particular point. Where does he or she go wrong? What's missing?
- Raise problems with a writer's rhetoric. Is he or she arguing fairly? Are there lapses in logic or inappropriate appeals to emotion (*pathos*) or character (*ethos*)?

The CR must be between 1,500 and 2,000 words (approx 3-4 pages). Papers not meeting the length requirement will receive a deduction in points. **The format should be as follows:** To begin, select a particular quotation (or idea) that exemplifies an important idea from the readings (or discussions) and place it at the top of your paper. In your written response, first explain in a paragraph or two what the quotation means and its context. Then, in the rest of the paper, respond in depth to the idea. Analyze it, relate it through your own experience, praise it, problematize it, refute it, get mad at it, question it, believe it, doubt it—whatever response feels appropriate for you, as long as you provide reasonable explanation for your response. *NB:* CRs have **NO DUE DATES**, and will be turned in at your leisure.

Graded Essays

You will write three different formal essays during the course of the semester. Each will cover a larger topic that we have discussed and read about. A detailed prompt will be handed out before each assignment. As a class, we will work together on the essays, and there will be lots of help available from me, from classmates, and from the Writing Center.

In-class Writing Assignments and Quizzes

Without prior announcement, I will assign in-class written work. This may be in the form of prewriting exercises, reading analysis, responses to reading discussion questions, or some other exercise. These writings contribute to your *Class Participation* grade.

Reading Comprehension Journals

For every reading assigned, students are required to write (in a separate notebook or similar) a *minimum* of two questions raised by the reading, and a *minimum* of one quote that the student finds compelling, challenging, etc. along with an explanation of why. Journals will be collected twice a semester (see Calendar for days) and are graded CR/NC

Research Project

For the final exam, you will research a topic relating to the content and theme of our class. You may explore a portion of our text we didn't cover; you may choose a current representation of a class theme; or you may come up with a topic and idea of your own. For your project, you will be required to write a **Prospectus** for your project, and then research your topic. You will prepare an **Annotated Bibliography**, writing detailed annotations for each entry using correct MLA documentation. Finally, you will use your research to write an extensive in-class research essay as your final exam. More detailed information will be given to you during the semester.

Deadlines for assignments are listed in the Assignment Schedule.

STUDENT CLASS POLICY AGREEMENT FORM

Directions: Read, sign, and return this form to class on Thursday, 1/16/20.

I, _____, attest that I have read and understand the class policies of Jacob Aharonian's English 5 course. By signing below, I agree to follow the class policies and to abide by the consequences set forth in the syllabus for failing to follow the policies.

Student Name

Date